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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000565

SIPDIS

STATE PASS TO USAID/OFDA/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SENV](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: DISASTER DECLARATION FOR FLOODS

REF: (A) DJIBOUTI 551; (B) DJIBOUTI 540

1. (U) SUMMARY: In light of unusually heavy rains and resulting flooding early this week and the inability of the host government to respond adequately to the needs of the population, Ambassador declares the situation in Djibouti City a disaster. Ambassador requests that immediate disaster relief funding be made available to assist in flood relief efforts. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) On April 13, torrential rains, heavy winds and high tides in Djibouti caused flash flooding and the River Ambouli to burst its banks in the capital. Fifty-one people are officially reported dead, 37 missing, and over 9,000 displaced. Although flood waters are slowly beginning to recede in some areas of the city, weather forecasts predict additional rains may arrive in the next few days, causing international aid agencies to worry that additional people will be displaced.

3. (U) The Government of Djibouti (GODJ) has expressed willingness to accept any assistance available from the USG and other international donors. GODJ does not have the technical, material or financial capabilities to fully respond to the damage caused by the flooding. The government reports 51 bodies recovered, however, the total estimated by sources on the ground and French military is between 200-300 dead. GODJ reports that 90 percent of the city of Djibouti's population has been affected.

4. (U) Immediate humanitarian assistance is needed in the form of medicines, mosquito nets, foodstuff for the displaced, clothing, roofing materials, pots and pans, sanitation, localized cisterns of potable water and the draining of standing flood waters. Damage to infrastructure includes breaks in the municipal water system, breaks in the railroad into the city and portions of roads and bridges leading to the city washed out. GODJ will carry out a more detailed needs assessment for rehabilitation efforts in the coming days.

5. (U) Imminent health threats possible are outbreaks of Cholera, Malaria, Typhoid and other communicable diseases. It is in the USG's interest to assure that outbreaks and contamination of the city water are prevented as this could severely affect the well-being of the civilian American community, as well as the American military base at Camp Lemonier.

6. (U) Most of the city's population lives in densely populated shantytowns. The Ambouli section of the city was the hardest hit by flash flooding, as it is in the flood plain of the Wadi and neighbors the levys/dikes that broke in the floods. Those in Ambouli that did not lose homes lost their livelihood since many Ambouli residents produce what little agriculture Djibouti does have. Another concentration of the city's population lives in Balbala, one of the areas of higher ground in Djibouti City. The main route to Balbala is to cross the Wadi at Ambouli. This route was completely washed out. Balbala has not had municipal water service since the flooding began. The higher income portions of the city were also severely affected. Gabode, a middle class neighborhood, still has two feet of standing water.

7. (U) Current efforts by the international community are being led by the French military. The American military medical units are testing the water in several areas of the city and the mosquito larva to try to determine what potential diseases are most imminent. UN organizations

present are planning on collaborating funds and other resources to focus on emergency needs and has appealed to donors to provide emergency assistance. ECHO and USAID/OFDA are currently in the country conducting a humanitarian assessment and more detailed reporting will follow septel.

18. (U) As Chief of Mission, I hereby declare that a flooding disaster exists in the country and request international disaster assistance funding be made available immediately. The GODJ is not able to adequately respond to emergency needs, is willing to accept international assistance, and it is in the best interests of the USG to help. Based on emerging needs and on organization capabilities, Embassy requests USD 100,000 in international disaster assistance to provide to the World Health Organization (WHO). Funding would go towards the purchase of emergency medical kits for cholera and malaria, and mosquito nets in response to the recent flooding, as well as assist in mitigating impact of additional flooding.

RAGSDALE